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The Fine Art of Living

Mary Russell Mills

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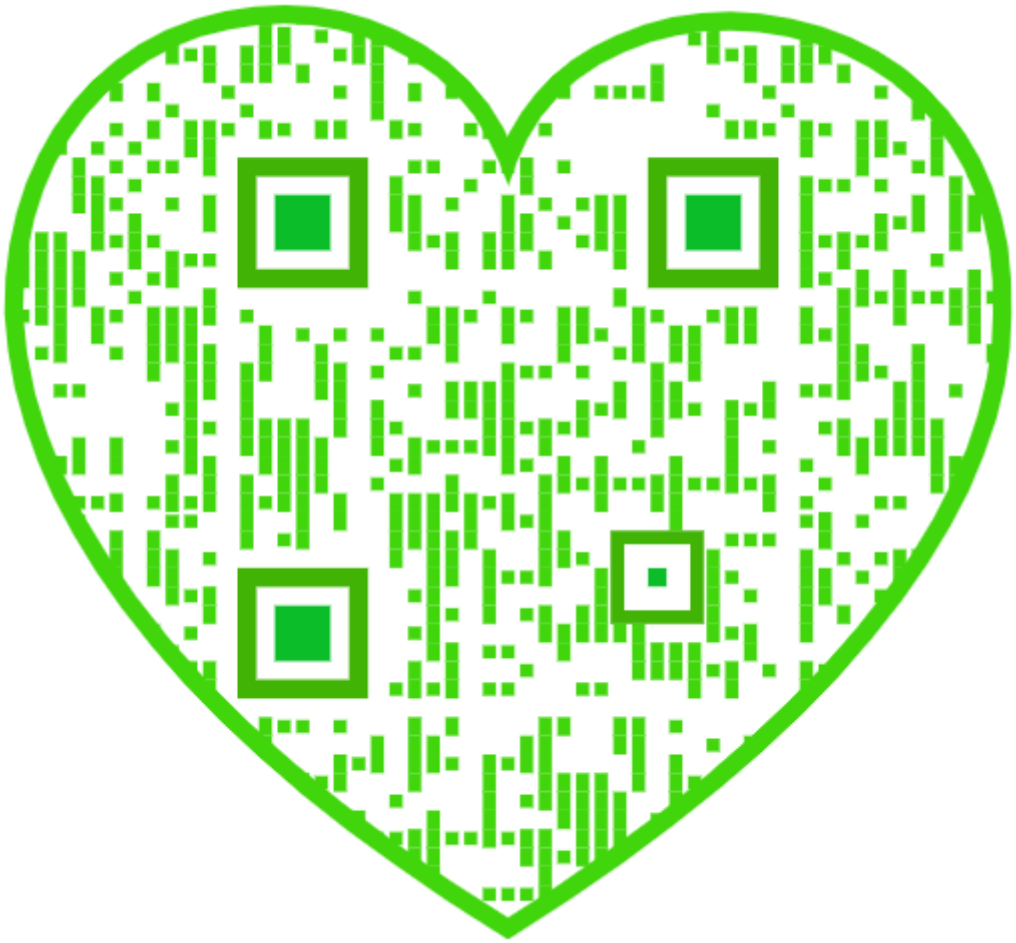

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THE FINE ART OF LIVING

MARY RUSSELL MILLS

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I

TRAGEDY, COMEDY, OR REALITY?

Have faith! Life is not a tragedy. Perhaps there must come a time in the history of every soul when he questions as to whether it can be anything else.

For one thing, Nature seems so fierce and merciless and can treat men, her oldest, most sympathetic and capable children, with cruel indifference. She engulfs them in seething waters, racks them with irremediable pains, burns them with fevers, wastes them with relentless consumptions, will not be entreated concerning them, and appears indifferent to the nature of the services they would gladly render her and her children. And the same old tyrant brings to life and to the certainty of suffering, multitudes who cannot, by any apparently possible means, find any path that leads out of the depths of distress. In these and many other cruel fashions she appears pleased to exhibit her power. There are aspects of her action that force us to feel that she cannot be trusted, despite all her fair show of beauty and benefit.

"Beauteous is Earth, but all its forest-broods
Plot mutual slaughter, hungering to live;
Of sapphire are the skies, but when men cry,
Famished, no drops they give."

But man and his condition are worse than nature. We could almost forgive and trust that in which we do not recognize our own sort of consciousness, but it is hard to believe that justice is administered or received in many of the transactions of human society. Here are those whose material prosperity is builded of the wrecks of the hopes, ambitions and efforts of their fellows; those who commit the grossest crimes under the sanction of law and reap in overflowing granaries and palaces the harvests of their robberies. Here are those who triumph because of brute strength —and there is brute strength of intellect as well as of body. Here are those who seem born for some great and fair destiny, and yet with some inherent fatal defects that lead them, inevitably and almost involuntarily, into the ways of shame and pain. Life has many a Macbeth who must be led on, both by external and internal influences until he so shapes his own life that he will always be tortured by the ghosts which he has evoked into being; many a Hamlet, who, with all his young ardor and ingenuousness must

pause where wretched disappointment and perfidy fill the whole horizon of his world, and lose the faith in life which alone makes sanity; many a Francesca da Rimini, who, with that beauty and fragrance and confidingness of nature that make the heart of earth's sweetest joys, loses her way, through the very tendencies that should have formed her directions to it.

And there are private riddles that each one feels he ought to read and must read, and yet cannot; there are binding, galling chains of circumstance that hold us fast; there are clouds that lower and darken and press and depress us!

"Be not mocked!
Life which ye prize is long-drawn agony:
Only its pains abide; its pleasures are
As birds which light and fly.

"Ache of the birth, ache of the helpless days,
Ache of hot youth and ache of manhood's prime;
Ache of the chill gray years and choking death,
These fill your piteous time.

"Sweet is fond Love, but funeral-flames must kiss
The breasts which pillow and the lips which cling;
Gallant is warlike Might, but vultures pick
The joints of chief and King.

"Ask of the sick, the mourners, ask of him
Who tottereth on his staff, lone and forlorn
'Liketh thee life?'—these say the babe is wise
That weepeth being born."

But darker, more terrible, more tragical than all, is the fact that never, never can we reach our own ideals, never can we be in our own individual lives that which we would. We can see him so clearly—that one who is too great to ever be less than perfect in kindness and gentleness and the most delicate considerations; that one who ever shines and glows with the sunlight of eternal cheer; that one whose strength is greater than every burden, whose calmness overflows every vicissitude. And we know that one is the self we may be, and must be, and yet we never overtake him. We must always be crying out in anguish, "The good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." This is the anguish that is greater than every other. We could bear any pain, and sing through any perplexity, if only,—if only we could be good!

But the same characteristics that seem to prove life a tragedy also fit it to be called a comedy. The tragical element is the failure to attain. We find so many hints and indirections and bold, broad-light evidences of the most boundless possibilities of goodness, beauty, perfection, and yet such pitiful, heart-rending shortcomings. And this is the essence of the comic,—

"an honest or well-intended halfness; a non-performance of what is pretended to be performed, at the same time that one is giving loud pledges of performance." Produced for us in lighter shades and touches, the comedy on the stage, the clown, the joke, all draw their mirth-provoking power from this one condition that describes life. My little girl had lost some trifling, but valued possession. She searched through the whole realm of her small kingdom. When I asked, "Did you find it, Dear?," the universal human wistfulness overshadowed her childish brow and she answered, "No, I *almost* found it, but——."

There are some theories of life held by many serious persons that would make of it nothing but a comedy. That, for instance, which takes account only of molecules and force, which refuses to recognize as knowledge all that lies beyond the province of the senses, which says, "The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile," which has no answer to make when we inquire concerning the innate sense of principles, the existence and practice of truth, justice, love. Another theory is that crude conception of idealism which says that all phenomena not only do not exist, but are entirely misrepresentative of

reality, and that our only salvation lies in utter disregard of the visible universe. Another conception, and one that held sway over many minds for many years and that is yet only slowly ebbing away, is that which thinks of humanity as broken loose and gone astray and redeemable only under conditions that with many are too difficult of attainment, and with many, too offensive to the reason to admit of their ever being fulfilled. These thoughts were all alive once, with reasons for their existence, and all signalized the desire and effort of the race for explanatory truth. But today they are crumbling corpses or fading ghosts. If these or many other long-held thoughts of life were true, it would be difficult to say which would be the wiser, to lie down and be crushed by the agonizing tragedy, or die of hysterical laughter at the silly comedy? The reason finds itself dishonored by such theories; the heart feels crushed and sickened, and the soul within us rises up in such awful majesty that we hurriedly and shamefacedly put aside these poor, little, unworthy thoughts of being and turn our faces toward the light wherein we may read a truer story of life and its meaning.

There is such a word of power,—of power because it is a word of truth. Listen!—with ears closed to all the world,—and your soul shall speak. Listen!—with open and quickened ears, —and a voice shall come, slowly, it may be, but surely, from every substance and force and combination of the substances and forces of life, and from out the depths of every fellow-soul, and confirm the truth that is in the deeps of your own nature.

GOD IS. The whole order of things is a good order. All of manifested life is the expression of one great, wise, loving, powerful, purposeful Intelligence, that through the ages and generations is working out a plan of unwordable magnitude and beauty—a plan that intends and accomplishes the perfect development and welfare of each being, each atom in existence. And the *process* can be trusted no less than the *purpose*. The mind which plans and guides is not outside of men and matter. It is higher and deeper than these, yet its action is through them—they are made by It, and are It. "O God, I think thy thoughts after Thee," worshipped the devout scientist. "Thou thinkest Thy thoughts through me," murmurs the under-

standing heart. The Power which creates and sustains and moves, does not work *upon* Its own creations, but is a constituent element of their being, is that in which all the elements inhere, by virtue of which they live and act and create their own conditions, events, environments and relations. Therefore I, who am a living thought of the all-wise Mind, a projection of the infinite Power, do not suffer from any conditions which I have not created; I do not meet with any events that I have not evoked by inward dispositions or outward acts; I am not bound by any chains of circumstance that I have not forged; I am in no relationships that I have not woven. There is nothing which touches me that is painful or untoward or galling or vicious that has not its root and cause in me. And the visible fruit appears to me exteriorly, that I may understand how I have desired or intended to do something for or in myself, rather than as the server and lover of the great Nature that carries us all toward the beatitude of selflessness. How faithful and beneficent, then, is the Intelligent Power working in me, that will not spare me the painful scourge and urge, by which alone I may learn to walk in the way of love and life! I will trust it; I will not seek to escape from it, for I know

that everywhere I will be met by that fidelity and benevolence that enclose me, by that universal rectitude and love which I am and must wholly become.

This insight into the Unity of Life is the great, all-comforting, restful, invigorating, enlarging experience that each soul of us needs, or has found as an all-sufficiency. It is an affirmation enclosing all our doubts. It steals the sting from every pain, banishes every fear, illuminates every perplexity. It overflows the littleness of our lives, purifies our hearts, puts the iron into our wills, weds us to universal ends. It is the essence of all that is sweetest and best in the highest counsels of Christianity—the admonitions toward trust in a loving Father. We may call it that if we will, so long as we see that not only our own little interests, but the reins of the universe are held in infinitely fatherly hands, and if, when we say, "I and my Father are one," we mean it not only for this one small self, but for all the other divine selves that walk with us toward the promised land. Have faith, then! Let us have faith when we are crushed and hurt, when we are misconceived and shut in, when we seem to have failed and when evil seems scarcely less rampant in our own lives than in

the world around us. Let us have faith when we look out over the surface of life and our whole being seems grated upon by the inequalities it presents to view. To remember at these times and at all times, the sublime thought of that one who said, "Have the faith of God,"—the faith that sees the consummation from the beginning and "the journey's end in every step of the way," is to win the victory that does more than vanquish, that transmutes all things into itself.

II

THE GOOD OF EVIL

When once we seriously ask, "Is there good in evil?" our inquiry will receive a reply. There is no question which the human mind may ask, that does not carry its own answer with it. It is a question only that we may discover the answer. We think we have been asking this question since the dawning of conscious intelligence within us, but we have only been anxiously inquiring, "How can I escape from evil?" Let us eliminate the personal element for once, and look at the matter impartially and judicially.

Is there good in evil—good that could not be made manifest except by the agency of that

which is dark and painful? If the affirmative to this inquiry can be seen, is not evil, *as* evil, banished from the universe of conception?

An insight into the nature of evil may be of value to us here. Is it an entity—something that has a real existence of its own? Understanding what all life is—an expression of Eternal Goodness—, we see that there can be no separate existence, no thing in itself, that could be called evil or bad; what appears such, must be a shadow, a reverse side, a failure to be, rather than some state of being. Whatever may be the possibilities connected with our mental processes in the future, we cannot now conceive of anything—any being, object or condition—that has not its corresponding state of not being. We cannot think of any possible attainment, and not also entertain the idea of possibility of failure. All that is called evil is the absence of perfection, the lack of completion. Faithfully apply this thought to any and every condition that could be looked at as evil, and we will see the truth of it. Physical disease, for instance, is a flawless example of this idea; all disease is a lack of the normal, positive condition, health. We can easily see the truth of this

matter in connection with bereavement of friends, or money, or position, or the estimation of society. Disappointment in what we are striving for, is, of course, to suffer the lack of that which we would have or do or be. All the crimes of society—the injustice, the greed, the cruelty, the anger, the violence, the selfishness with which man often practically regards his fellow-men, as an individual and collectively, are all the results and indications of the immature and blind condition, in which we do not yet perceive the truth that we are all brothers—children of one great Parent-Life,—related elements of that Life; and that consideration of our equal, mutual interests, is the only sane method of association. This view is also perfectly explanatory of the seeming injustices and cruelties of nature. The "Nature" that is, apparently, outside of him, and the child of Nature, man, are not separate existences; they are links in one chain of being, varying expressions of one universal force and effort. That force and effort are of a moral nature and in process of evolution. All the throes and convulsions of nature such as storms, earthquakes, and similar occurrences are but evidences that the whole great organism has not yet

attained a condition of equilibrium or completion. They find their parallel in the passions of man. These passions of nature have no more of the quality of permanence than the like quakings of human nature, and will disappear when the latter are outgrown. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." Again, there are children born into conditions of deformity of both body and mind; conditions of degradation both of nature and circumstances. But here, too, we find the solution forthcoming. No person is a separate being—a somewhat, that should or can, in any sense, be considered by himself. He is an element of the world-life, at once an effect and a cause, and his conditions, of body and mind and circumstances, are indicative of the success or failure on the part of society in general and his direct ancestors in particular, in the realization of their dignity and duty.

Further than this, each new soul comes no' here or there into the active phases of the world-life, without reason or choice of his own. The decided character of natural tendencies and developments reveal this too plainly to the eyes of

the unprejudiced student, to admit of doubt concerning it. A past there must have been for every soul that has taken human form; we may only blunderingly guess at the nature of that past, but that it must have been, is all too clearly evidenced by the structure and peculiarities of the being, himself. And if we look inward for the reason, we shall see that every outward condition into which a child is born is the symbol of some attainment or the lack of it, in the life of that soul.

As every external condition is the symbol of an inner condition, the outer form and movement that admonish us of what has been done, or has failed to be done, within, so it is a mirror, in which we may read the truth of what we now are, and how far we have come. We can look at every pain, or distress, or terror in this way, and the revelations it will bring to us will cause it to stand forth a minister of benignant beauty and efficiency. Not that always will we be able to immediately decipher the details of these divine meanings, to define the particular illness of the soul, which the physical illness betokens, the particular weakness which the failure signifies, the antagonism in our own nature which takes

the form of a poisoned shaft of malice from an apparent enemy; but always, if we welcome it, in confidence that there is no such thing as injustice, and that every event that befalls us is put forth from our own nature, we shall, at least, be able to understand that suffering of any sort, brings to us the message that inward health does not prevail, and that we need the effect of more lofty aspiration, more intense effort, and a more complete consecration to the task of actualizing our highest ideals. Let the purifying tide of the highest life sweep through the soul, and it will wash away all particular sediments. And, very gradually, it may be, but surely, there will also come the clearing of vision that will enable us to see the definite lines along which our efforts should be directed.

Thus evil serves as a spur to progress. We know all good things by contrast. We see beauty, we feel comfort, we are led into the choices of wisdom, by strongly defined contrasts. If conditions were always agreeable, would not the "here" be as good as the "there?" Thus we may accept the hardship, the pain, and even the sin, not only as a light of revelation concerning the present condition, but as an index finger

pointing steadily onward and upward. True resignation is no indolent bowing of the head, and letting the tempestuous waters of life beat sore upon it. It is accepting pain submissively indeed, and with no shadow of resistance, joyfully acknowledging it as the kindest and most faithful of ministering angels, but also loyally accepting its suggestion, "It is better farther on."

This is the deepest and highest view of that which is called evil,—of its nature and office. But even when we find it difficult to look quite as deeply into the matter as this, we may find many considerations that will bring us comfort and courage, lying, as it were, like pearls, on the surface. As, for example, the truth that no great or beautiful thing, from the creation of a lovely form, to the performance of a noble deed, was ever yet accomplished, but by passing through stages of stress and hardship, or, at least, of intense, soul-trying effort.

There is the peaceful landscape, stretched in smiling repose. But the majestic, sky-mantled mountains, the confines of the mighty sea, and the solidly-framed, rock-ribbed globe, itself, were formed only by such throes and vicissitudes

of nature as we may only guess at as yet. Bring before the mind's eye all the civilizations and governments and forward movements of the world's history. They represent the efforts and lives of great men who have caught large visions, —visions for which they have striven and fought and bled until they have been able to cut their way through barriers, mountain-high, or have traversed seemingly endless morasses of doubt, ignorance, superstition, conservatism, and the brute opposition of stupidity,—pressing on until often they have laid their bones in some crevice by the wayside. Only by such means did any ideal image become stamped on the institutions of human society.

What makes any life grand or heroic but the triumph over great hardships, or the courageous meeting of great trials? The glory of each great man has been that he achieved the seemingly impossible. Those whom the world has called its Messiahs and Saviors have passed through the fiercest furnaces of affliction. Never has there been a Buddha without his sacrifice, a Christ without his cross.

How shall the sympathies flow, unless we have learned, by personal experience, the agony of the

thornpath of pain, along which others are now walking? How shall compassion, that purest child of love, be brought to the birth except by throes of suffering? How shall "patience have her perfect work" except by long contact with hope deferred? How shall the nature become strong, but by the vigorous and continual exercise of the moral muscle, in the attempt to reach higher ground?

Yet the liberation of these finest qualities, the beauty and symmetry of character thus formed, is what we would refuse to ourselves when we seek to escape from hardship and pain. We refuse the truest knowledge, the largest development, the widest usefulness, when we put aside, even in desire, the cup of suffering.

"The cry of man's anguish went up unto God:
'Lord, take away pain!
The shadow that darkens the world Thou hast made,
The close-coiling chain
That strangles the heart, the burden that weighs
On the wings that would soar—
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou hast made,
That it love Thee the more!'

Then answered the Lord to the cry of His world:
'Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,
And sacrifice high?

Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price
And smiles at its loss?
Can ye spare from your lives that would climb unto mine
Any anguish or cross?'"

We cannot spare these chastening influences, for thus it is that the Artist—Life—beats us out into the fair shape of the Ideal. Mayhap there will come a time when we can look so unflinchingly at the great, luminous, affirmative nature of life, that we shall need no sight or touch of the dark negative; a time when we shall so give ourselves to the power of the onward-flowing current that we shall be sensible of no swirl or eddy that seems to sweep us backward for even the briefest moment; a time when progress shall be strifeless, and there shall be only the joyous, all-pervading consciousness of the unswervingly-upward trend of life. Until then, let us gladly welcome all consciousness of evil that may help us to rise above that consciousness, all pain that serves its purpose by being transmuted into the perfect joy.

"Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is Good steadily hastening towards immortality,
And the vast all that is called Evil I saw hastening to merge itself and become lost and dead."

But "dead" only that it may find a glorified resurrection in the Life of infinite, eternal Goodness.

III

"THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD"

The awakened soul aspires to live in an abiding consciousness of the Presence of God. He will be content with nothing less than such a sense of the all-sufficient comfort as brings consolation in every trial; such a sense of the Everlasting Strength as would enable us to bear every burden and go fearlessly through the darkest passages of life; such a sense of the Infinite Wisdom as would illuminate every vexed question; such a sense of righteousness as would keep alive and burning within us that passionate desire for goodness, which possesses us at times, but at others seems weak and faint—the desire for perfect integrity, that keeps us inwardly pure and outwardly just and tender; such a sense as uplifts us in ecstasy, and reveals to us the beauty and perfection that are behind and beneath and above and in all that now appears low or perplexing or unworthy—"the splendor of the God, bursting through each chink and

cranny." If we could always live on this height, have eyes that were always open to this wondrous vision, how should we soar where now we creep!

To live in this perpetual beatitude is not only the privilege, but the entire duty of every human soul. To this end came we into being as individuals. We can attain it, but not without effort on our own part. This effort,—strenuous, unremitting, taxing every particle of the capacity of the mind for attention, all the energy of the will, all the powers of the whole being,—this effort is the vocation whereunto we are called.

In the seventeenth century there lived, as a laybrother of a modest, monastic order, a simple, humble soul, who was unlearned as regards the culture of the schools, who wrote no book and held no high ecclesiastical position; yet who lived a life that had the power to make men stop and think and look up; a life that gave one the feeling of a touch of heaven somewhere in the atmosphere, a life that made the kitchen of the monastery a temple, shining with a divine light, as he performed the duties of cook; a life that gave dignity and sacredness to every humble task; and drew to him for counsel high dig-

nitaries of the church; and a life that has remained to this day an inspiration to many devout souls. It is to this one we are indebted for the happy expression which forms the title of this chapter. He told of "The Practice of the Presence of God" as the open secret of his radiant life. And every soul from whom have perceptibly emanated the divine light and power that have lured and lifted other souls upward, has, in some fashion, spoken of this method of life as that on which all spiritual attainment depends. The presence of God must be *practised* with the earnestness, the unswerving attention, the intense application with which we practise any art in which it is our dearest hope to achieve success.

There is first that act of the Will, by which we select the largest and worthiest idea of God we can find in our own mind; by which we choose to become thoroughly *in love* with that Idea; by which we consecrate ourselves, in a once-for-all way, to a glad, unquestioning, but intelligent obedience to no motive in all the wide world, but the behests of the God who is thus enthroned. Following this, there is the constant reference to this Highest Wisdom as the

Arbiter of all our actions; the continual effort to actualize this highest Goodness in the practical life, to let the Infinite qualities flow through the finite capacities and functions. The soul who has gone thus far is sure to learn, sooner or later, that the God he has apparently chosen and installed in this way—that he has seemingly almost created,—was the Primal Resident in the inmost sanctuary of his nature, appearing in response to his conscious need and will—the One in whom at last must be merged all the varied dispositions and developments that seem, often, to represent, at different stages of growth, many different personalities within the one man.

But along with the practice of the presence of God in one's own being, there must go the effort and purpose to find Him in all other manifestations of life.

No especial effort is needed to detect the Immanent God in all the appealing beauty of nature. Very slightly anointed eyes may behold this Presence in the rich and tender colorings, the enveloping fragrance of a rose; in the steadfast strength and strangely familiar grandeur of the mountain outline; in the caressing softness of the sward. His warmth of love embraces us in

the sunshine; His high thoughts smite us in the tempest; His height of glory lifts us toward the stars; His somewhat nearer loveliness bathes us in the tints of sunset; He wooes us with the winsomeness of motherlove in all His humblest creatures. Poor, indeed, is the human creature who has not been soothed and thrilled and powerfully stimulated by contact with the Divine Presence in nature; who does not know how to open the gates for the in-flowing of this all-purifying and powerful flood of life, that is at once a healing and a tonic.

But while it is easy to see Him in the loveliness of the natural world and in the happier conditions of life, we commonly find it more difficult to detect the benignant and unfailing love of God in the more trying circumstances in which we often find ourselves. When all goes well, and we find our objects easy of access, our plans fitting into nice conjunction with surrounding conditions and occurrences, we say, "How Providential!"—which is to observe "How much of God there is in it all!" Why should not we feel the same when we find our plans raveling out into uselessness, and our objects elusively fleeing before us? Might not the failure be a

condition more needed by us, at this particular time, than the success?

We can cultivate the power to see, and the habit of seeing, the Divine Wisdom in every binding circumstance, every unwished-for event, every galling relation, every trying and sad experience! It is a waste of energy to regret it, to strive to escape from it. It is an evidence of knowledge of the real truth of its nature, when we meet it as an expression of the wise and loving Genius that clothes Himself in all manner of strange disguises, that we may be adequately taught and safely led. In a tale of the early life of the Buddha, when the unwisely tender father would have shielded his son from every repulsive or painful sight or sound, the gods are said to have taken on themselves the forms of the aged, the decrepit, the needy and suffering and dead, that the eyes of this soul might be opened to the facts of life and the flood-gates of his sympathies unbarred. Constantly regarding the presence of this Highest Wisdom in all the experiences of life, we shall soon come to see that these experiences are our saviors, filled with the great, retrieving, restoring, upbuilding power and life of God that is in all and through all.

"Let me go where'er I will
I hear a sky-born music still:
* * * * * *
'Tis not in the high stars alone,
Nor in the cups of budding flowers,
Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone
Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,
But in the mud and scum of things
There alway, alway something sings."

Another excellent opportunity for practising the Deific Presence is that of finding Him in all our fellow-men. Until we see God in each human being, we remain strangers and aliens, unacquainted with even the nearest friend, and separated by blindness and ignorance from all other human beings. We speak of "a knowledge of human nature;" the only true knowledge is that which recognizes in each soul a child of God, a spirit born of the infinite Father-spirit, apart from whom there is no being. It is that perception which sees that in every man there is that which not only renders him redeemable from the saddest and sinfullest condition, but translatable into the highest manner of being; which sees that the slightest or commonest bit of affection or sacrifice or self-effacing courage is a shining forth of the Deific nature which is so inevitably in man that it breaks through at many points, long before he has recognized it

and is voluntarily acting according to its dictates. If there be this faith within us, we will, in all our relations and transactions, proceed on the assumption that "there is an infinite worthiness in man which will appear at the call of worth." Then will not only the being, but the interests of each brother-soul be sacred in our eyes, and an all-compelling reverence and love will call forth the God in each human breast, and bring him into harmony with all the God without. We will understand that this thought should be ever present in our relations with our children. This is no ignorant little being, "*my* child," on whom I must enforce submission to my desires, but a soul, in all the dignity and majesty of his divine birthright, a soul on his upward way, with his own great destiny to work out, a soul with whom I am brought into these tender and mysterious relations that I may be to him no dictator, but a friendly aid toward all height and beauty of character. Thus revering, thus trusting the God within my child, harshness and anxiety will lose themselves in my wise and calm effort to assist his footsteps in the heavenward path.

Another instrument furnished us on which we may profitably practise the presence of God, is property. Two heresies concerning property have gained precedence in our mind and must be eradicated by patient effort, if it is not possible for us at once to let the sunlight of true vision banish them forever. One is the thought that property, income, salary, or whatever shape "this world's goods" may have taken for us, is something apart from our real selves, different from that portion of us which worships and loves, that part which we call the moral or spiritual nature. Our financial affairs are as much a part of our real being as our aspirations, and a part in which we can as truly behold the glory and perfection of the One who is not only source and power, but also form, in all the great mystery of life. Our aspirations are revelations of that which we may attain; our present possessions are revelations of our present attainments. Often very luxurious surroundings and enjoyment of them are indications of satisfaction with low achievements; and that the higher powers of the Spirit are asleep. And a straightened financial condition is often the reflection and evidence of that bound state of soul that is

at once a warning and a prophecy. Riches and poverty and all the degrees of condition between the two, have many other lessons and offices for us; these mentioned are but examples of their beneficent teachings.

The other form of unbelief is that which conceives of anything as "mine." No form that property can assume can be anything but a visible combination or utilization of the eternal forces of the universe, the forces that are neither mine nor thine, nor any man's, the forces that are the sensible manifestations of the "Infinite and Eternal Energy" that worketh through all. The only sense in which this land, or bank stock can be called mine is that in which I am granted the privilege and responsibility of becoming a medium for its redistribution in the world.

"This is not my house; it is the house of Christ," says the true priest of God, whom Victor Hugo introduces to the world in his immortal tale of the redemptive power of love; "You are suffering," he goes on, addressing the weary, hopeless, crime-sick soul who has sought his door, "you are hungry and thirsty; be welcome. And do not thank me; do not tell me

that I take you into my house. This is the house of no man except him who needs an asylum. I tell you, who are a traveler, that you are more at home here than I; whatever is here is yours."

It is not goods, nor money, then, in the usual and vulgar sense, that I have and hold. I have, if I see the truth, entered into a holy communion and partnership with the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," who holdeth the welfare of all His children equally dear. And this blessedness of sharing is not reserved alone for those who have large so-called possessions. He who has little shall not be debarred from the enrichments and enlargements of nature that come in connection with the sweet act of sharing with those who are needy. It is not the size but the quality of the giver's intention instilled into the offering, that determines its value; and long ago a wise teacher held up for the world's admiration a rare and precious jewel called "the widow's mite." But it is not only in that which is given that we may practically recognize the august Presence. There should not be less of consecration in our manner of spending for our own needs than in our bestowal upon others. If we rightly perceive whereunto the body is to be

housed and clothed and fed,—that it may be a fitter instrument for the soul's use; to what end the mind is to receive discipline and refreshment and enrichment from the treasure-houses of many lands and ages,—that it may better do the soul's bidding—, then shall we never spend, but "according to our genius;" then careless lavishness shall be seen in its real vulgarity, and the money with which we purchase food or books for our own use shall be as sacredly given as that with which we feed the poor or endow churches.

Still further, each duty is a sacrament fraught with the presence of the Highest. Otherwise it is not a duty. The feeling, *I ought,* is the turning of the Divine Energy towards its task, and the conscious recognition of it is the holiest of human experiences, except that further one of glad and intelligent yielding thereunto. These experiences dwell in us blindly, for long and long, "the energies working within the energies," as the Oriental thought vigorously expresses it. We are pressed upon by the imperative sense of duty, but we know not yet what it is that should be done; we labor for much that is not bread; we rush forth with increasingly feverish haste

into more and more complicated maelstroms of action; and often, failing of our ends, or of relish for such ends as are attained, we turn dizzy and faithless, trusting neither ourselves nor any idea of a clearly-guiding Power. But this is because we are children, and do not understand that the God who acts, proceeds directly from the God who is in the action, and is the end of the action. Let us understand that the same Wisdom that overpowers us with the sense of duty can make clear the object that is the correlative of that sense. Realizing that our individual power to act is a streamlet of the divine energy, let us trust it to flow in a divine direction. Thus shall we see God in the action and its accomplishment. Then we shall cease to be disturbed and concerned as to what we do. No place or moment or task will be inopportune or repugnant, except such as bears the stamp of our private wilfulness. Of every least, common task we will know that if in the divine plan we are set to perform it, there must be a divine manner of doing it. We will serve tables and scrub floors with holy hands, and the sewer shall become "a sanctuary in spite of itself."

But to return to the thought of deepest import, my highest obligation is to discover, to recognize, to live with, to be, the God that is within myself. Failing in this, I will never become truly acquainted with Him elsewhere. If I do not continually trust the presence of the Highest Wisdom here at the very center of my being, I shall not find it always in the external conditions and experiences that are such as a lesser wisdom would shrink from. Unless I give place to the Soul of the largest benevolence as my soul, I may grasp and endeavor to hold somewhat in the clutch of a small selfishness that conceives of its interests as separate from those of the Universe. If I see myself as aught but a channel of the Highest Goodness, something less than goodness may blur and stain my conduct. If I mistake myself for anything but a small fragment of Universal Being, I may wound or bruise, or be wounded by, such other fragments as I may disregard or jostle or displace.

But I can learn to abide in the presence of the supreme and solitary Majesty that fills and overflows this small sanctuary of my human soul. I

can draw on the flawless wisdom, the boundless strength. I can say to my weak heart:

"Heart, thou art great enough for a love that never tires."

In Nature, in all the experiences of life, in my brother-men, in my possessions, in my daily tasks, in my own soul, I may look so steadily at the Immanent God, that the great glory shall break through everywhere, and all life shall become resplendent with that ineffable light.

IV

THE STRENGTH OF NON-RESISTANCE

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man shall sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

There is a deathless vigor, attainable by every one of us, but possessed not so long as we prac-

tically doubt concerning its source or the method of its attainment. It is the unfailing energy drawn from the very fountain of life itself, when all striving has ceased and the currents of the individual being, unimpeded by any personal will, flow with the current of Universal Being. He who has acquired the art of absolute non-resistance has passed, by a partially obscured door, into the cabinet of causes, into the secret place whence are the issues of life.

This principle of Non-Resistance has been taught by the religious and spiritual teachers who have sounded the most profound depths of human need and experience, and risen to the most lofty heights of power and inspiration; those whom the largest numbers of intelligent men have unquestioningly received as bearing the stamp of a heavenly origin.

And yet, when this principle has been stated as a rule of action, it has met with more of questioning, of hesitation and antagonism than any other. It has seemed peculiarly out of harmony with the whole thought and genius of our western world. So intent, indeed, have the peoples of this latest civilization been on the working out of certain ideals of material benefit and

progress, that as a principle or as an important element of the teachings of the great, universally-recognized prophet of this portion of the world, it has been very largely lost sight of. It has not only occupied no prominent place in the expositions of his professed interpreters, but those very priests and instructors have appeared, for the most part, to feel no obligation to live in the spirit indicated by the teaching of their leader, at least to give this spirit anything like a pervading prevalence in their thought or actions. On hearing a clear statement of the teaching of Jesus on this point, an intelligent man who had all his life attended the services of prominent churches, remarked, with no little of surprised interest, "I have *never* heard anything like that." When awakened souls have eagerly inquired of their ordinary spiritual teachers concerning the meaning of Jesus on this point, the explanations have often been but ingenious or bungling equivocations, although, we may well believe, ignorantly conscientious ones. Of course there have been many souls, take it the centuries through, who have reached a sufficient degree of intellectual and spiritual freedom to slip the noose of popular opinion, and not only per-

ceive, but live in the beauty of this transcendent idea, but these have generally succeeded in giving only an impression of their own courage and sanctity, rather than of the practicability of their method. Our governments and society are organized to punish the evil-doer and protect the innocent. As nations we are equipped for the violent protection of our rights and bloody resistance to any encroachment on them. Our "business is organized warfare." There is provision made in even the most humane of our institutions, our asylums for the needy, our churches and schools, for some sort of discipline for offenders. The home has been the most nearly exempt from methods of punishment, but perhaps the best-ordered and most truly conscience-governed homes have been those where obedience to a general law was in some fashion required and a penalty laid on those who disregarded it. We have grown into the habit of thinking that it is a disgrace and weakness to be found lacking in firmness in the assertion and defense of our "rights," and we almost universally ascribe the solidity and glory of our civilization to our warlike and aggressive methods.

But all the while there speaks to the quickened

and reverent ear of him who will listen, the sublimely authoritative voice of him whom many have recognized as foremost in the counsels of the God of all wisdom,—"But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." If any man shall smite you, give him the opportunity for another blow. If he would take from you by force or process of legal proceeding, give him more than he asks, grant his most unreasonable request, and lend, hoping for no return. Is not all this clearly an outrage on the best ideas of justice and right that society has developed up to this time?

Our whole difficulty in regard to this matter has proceeded from our attempt to look at it from the outside and judge of it by its external appearance, plausibility and possible consequences. Perhaps this has been the best we could do, thus far. The knowledge of any principle is received, with most people, by its translation into a method of action, and the interpretation comes slowly through its application. But there are always those who intuitively perceive the eternal, necessary qualities that go to constitute a principle that spreads its immeasurable vastness of truth, as a background for all possible actual explications of its existence and

beauty. To the pure in heart, Non-Resistance has revealed itself as such a principle, and when shown to be such, all questions as to whether it be practicable as a method of action, appear frivolously irrelevant and to have had their birth on a low plane of selfish utilitarianism. It will be seen that when it finds voluntary and consistent expression in an individual life, non-resistance is an attitude of mind rather than a mode of action. It is *the habit of looking at the invisible.* It is the recognition of the Divine Nature that is at the heart of all things, that is the essential substance, source and purpose of each being and object in the universe; that is the central, formative force and cause of every event, condition, relation and experience that has ever been known or will be known. Non-Resistance of evil is the exercise of that Reason wherein we see things as they are, in their own true state of being, not in the haze caused by the crude and often repulsively-unformed conditions incidental to their and our state of extreme youth and partial development.

One who had, long after the hairs were white and the years increased, preserved a face and manner of beautiful serenity, was asked the

secret of her calm and replied, "I remember, always, that there is a Heart at the heart of the universe that is friendly to me." The confidence of this memory is what he practically expresses, who steadily refuses to combat any appearance of evil. He considers it wasted time to expend energy or care in attempting to destroy that which is of its own nature impermanent and must in the course of a natural process disintegrate and disappear.

He makes this thought the guiding motive in all his intercourse with his fellows. He says, I understand that this violent aggressiveness, this grasping at the apparent good, this disregard of the need of others, these indications of a low and coarse origin in the brute nature, that for a time I behold in my brother, are but the unpleasant vestiges of a lower state of being, that presently will fall away and leave him pure and fair, the child of God which he is. I will see the true man *now,* and, ministering to him, procure his more speedy emergence. In him I will confide, him I will address, and to him I will lend and give all things that are typical of the wealth of the soul, which I share with him, if I, too, be a true child of the Highest. If, in the blindness

of his childish ignorance, he would wound or injure me, it is only the same poor weakness and wickedness in me that he would strike, and I will perpetuate that in neither of us, by a returning blow. If he will and must, let him beat into nothingness the brute in me, and exhaust even to the death the brute in him. Meanwhile the God in me shall call with such power unto the God in him, that we shall come to express the harmony of identical nature.

And thus will I regard all the outer conditions of my life howsoever unlovely or painful or degrading they may be. I will not resist them, understanding that in whatever strange guise they come, they are messengers from the Lord of life; they are, seen yet more nearly, but the varied coverings of His own majesty of Wisdom, as He comes to me with most loving intent. I will not resist them; I will go down deep enough to find the God in them, and go *with* Him.

It may now be clearly seen how this attitude of mind and rule of conduct are the representations, in the will and action, of a principle that lies at the very heart of the religious life—a principle that sooner or later each one of us will

have to reckon with, and with which every individual life will have to be squared. The intelligently religious life is the life of trust and love; trust in the whole good order of the world; trust in the God that is in everything; love that "taketh no account of evil," love that "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," love that "never faileth." When we trust, when we love, we do not resist, we find the soul that is in harmony with our own soul, and act with it.

There are three specific aspects in which this manner of life approves itself to the enlightened mind, and these three cover the whole range of relationship and duty.

1. We should practice non-resistance for the sake of every soul with whom we come into a one-to-one relationship. Faithfully observed, this mode of intercourse would banish all the irritations, retaliations and recriminations that steal so much of the sweetness from the home-life. If the tenderness that is the dominant chord in every real home, became supreme, without a second, the homes would overflow the world, and the universal "heavenly home" would indeed have become an actuality. Every

enemy would be slain, if we thus "struck at his heart," and overcame his hate by "not-hate." Every criminal whom the methods of violence have failed to reform—and that means every criminal the world has known, for force has never converted to purity and nobility one unclean or unworthy wretch—would be constrained at last to yield to the patience of infinite gentleness.

2. Society is to find not only its noblest development, but its surest method of progress, in the practice of this principle. Advancing civilization represents itself in outward convenience and advantage, in increased material comfort, in the mastery of natural forces, in the communizing of facilities for intellectual culture, in the growing prevalence of institutions which are channels for the overflowing of the humane spirit. The accurate observer sees all these as evidences of the development of principles, finding their expression in the practical life. When this greatest principle, Trusting Love, shall be accepted, shall present the test and set the standard in all our societary life, then shall we find that the Kingdom of Heaven has not only come nigh unto us, but that we have passed

through its silently-swinging "pearly gates," while we clasped hands and walked *with* our brothers.

3. For ourselves we shall learn that herein we find the only place of rest and power. This absolute committal of ourselves to unreserved trust in Life, in all its manifestations, this saying, I will recognize no enemy, I will see no evil that is not enclosed by, and resolvable into, the Perfect Good; I will resist nothing; but will peacefully co-operate with that Will that works for righteousness in and through the life of every creature—this preserves to us the strength that ordinarily we fritter away in striking at shadows. Foolish are the efforts to vanquish that which we have taken to be a monstrous entity, but whose very name—Sin—reveals it to be naught but a *failure to be,* and whose appearance may be wholly obliterated by the wise will that replaces it with the only positive substance and force in all the realms of life—Goodness.

Therefore, as said the ancient Sage, Laotze, "Reason always practises non-assertion, and there is nothing that remains undone."

"Therefore the holy man puts his person behind and his person comes to the front. He sur-

renders his person and his person is preserved. Is it not because he seeks not his own? For that reason he can accomplish his own."

"The Heavenly Reason strives not, but it is sure to conquer. It speaks not, but it is sure to respond. It summons not, but it comes of itself. It works patiently but is sure in its designs."

V

THE NATURE OF LOVE

Trust is the fixed attitude of the mind of him who lives the life of the Spirit. He is committed, without reserve, to an absolute and abiding faith in the Source of life and all the objects and processes of life.

Love is the expression of this trust through the emotions, the will and the executive abilities. It is at once a sentiment and a method of action. In that it is a sentiment, its nature is universal, unfathomable. It lays hold on the very essence of being. Never shall its beginning be guessed at, never its completion beheld, until it shall cease to be known as aught that is separate from ourselves or its Author. But in its present period of manifestation and our present stage of

development, it is not only a sentiment but also something more and less than that,—a mode of behavior and expression of relationship. We who would intelligently and voluntarily come into harmony with the Divine intention, are constrained to a faith that we can discover and make clear to ourselves such characteristics of the holy fire and force as will enable us to wholly yield the capacities of our human nature to become fit vessels for the bearing of it into every highway and byway of the world's life. To this end, although we cannot hope to touch more than the outer rim of its beauty and give the faintest suggestions of its majestic outlines, we would reverently inquire concerning its significance as it may be manifested through us.

1. Love is not mere affection, such as grows easily between those who are conscious of bonds formed by the relationships of nature and proximity. We often confound it with that, and argue from that false but naturally assumed premise that we cannot love all as we love some human beings. Affection, in its purest and most refined forms, is a very beautiful picture and hint of love,—is indeed in its warmth of enthusiasm, its tender and noble considerations and

sacrifices for the beloved one, a ray of real love, shining through the opaqueness of our heavy natures. Observing it in others and in ourselves, following its high leadings, we may become instructed as to the loveliness and constancy and strength and power of love. The observation of a genuine affection, manifested even in the life of one who otherwise is living coarsely or meanly, is always a joy and an assurance. We may say, he is learning by this one little reading in the primer of life, a line of life's greatest lore, and we know the fuller and richer revelations must follow, until he shall become a savant, a teacher of teachers, and that he and all the human family shall continue to grow in this knowledge of knowledges until it shall be no longer necessary for one to say to another, "Know the Lord, for all shall know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest."

But looking at the affections as they exist in us at the present time, we must, if we would gather from them hints as to the real nature of love, separate that which is high and pure from the selfishness in them; from the seemingly inevitable desire for personal good, with which they are so marred and weighted, that they often

bring to us more of pain than of pleasure. In its lowest aspect, affection, or that which is mistakenly called love, is merely pleasure in the sensation of being loved. It is that delight in the reception of attention that can so easily pass into an aching void of disappointment and longing when the attention is withdrawn. A higher stage of affection reveals it as a sort of commerce, a give and take, in which the giving is largely, although not always consciously, the result and provocation of the receiving. Let us not fail to gather all the sweetness and real suggestive beauty that we may from this stage of the development of love. Better to give in this way than not to give at all. And this manifestation holds its own intrinsic teaching, also,—namely, that all the giving of love brings its own return, that no particle of the heart's wealth is ever poured out into nothingness, or fails to return to the hand of the giver. Later on we shall learn that there is a divine recklessness that banishes from our minds all concern except that of the giving, but most of us as yet have found it possible to live—with the exception of occasional sublime flights—only on the plane where we may receive love's price in coin of

its own kind. A soul loyally following the indications which life gives us in this, that might be called the economic stage in the growth of love, would come to see something of its real nature—would grow into the observation of the fact that more joy was generated within himself by his bestowal than by his reception of the offices of love, and in the course of time would prove his own high lineage by voluntarily exchanging his "market-cart for a chariot of the sun." But it is possible for us to open the eyes *now,* and by a recognition of the truth, pass swiftly by an intellectual process, over all the dreary lengths that otherwise must be traversed by practical experience. Doing this we shall see that,—

2. Love is the will to serve. It is that state of the soul in which the giver is purely a giver; in which he so separates himself from that lower nature that feels pleasure in receiving, that it is as though that nature were dead. He knows not whether he receives or no. He heeds not whether his act meets recognition. Here is a soul who needs the kindly service of a friend. He can be that friend. The act and its reward are one and are not separated in the

mind of the lover. It is said that "true love cannot be unrequited." This is true, but because it is requited by naught but itself. "All the money of God is God." Thus love begins to shine with its own light, and we become conscious of the enchanting flavor of that wine of eternal joy which is quaffed only by lavishly pouring it out for others.

3. Yet if love were only the will to serve, it might bear with it some sense of superiority, as though it were somewhat the richer and gave in princely fashion to a beggar. It gives, indeed, and for the joy of giving; but if its own light truly illuminates its movements, it sees that its offering is laid at the shrine of a god. For Love is the perception of the true nature of the being loved. It is the clarified vision by which we see that every object of life, beautiful or repulsive, is a manifestation of the One Life, than which there is no other. Love is cognizant of the divine essence within every form; beholding all nature as "a projection of God into the unconscious," returning by slow stages and gradually refining forms, unto its Source and Self. Love looks upon no distorted countenance of a fellow-being in which it does not see the features of

the one Beloved. Love reverently touches every stained hand of humanity as a hand of God; trusts every human heart as the living sanctuary of the Deific Presence, whose glory and power must presently shine forth until it shall have obliterated all the appearance of vileness and impurity which were indications that this child of the Highest had not yet come to know himself. Love sees him as what he is. Truly saith that great prophet of the Soul, "He who is in love, is wise and is becoming wiser, sees newly every time he looks at the object beloved, drawing from it with his eyes and his mind those virtues which it possesses. . . . . And the reason why all men honor love is because it looks up and not down; aspires and not despairs."

4. Love is the recognition of our true relationship with one another. It sees that, all life being of one texture, woven of threads so inextricably interlaced that no one could be withdrawn and remain whole; that no one could be injured and the material not be marred; that all life being the manifestation of one substance and force, of which each being is but a small fragment or expression; that all life, as one vast sea of Being, but swirls itself into eddies here

and there, which we know as individuals;—so the interests of one of these individuals are the interests of all. My brother's needs are my needs. My brother's growth or retardation of growth is mine. He may not be wounded or cramped or hindered in any way and I not be, also. My enrichment is his, or it is but a visionary gain that I see as having come into my hands, and I am still "poor and blind and naked." Not that love in its infant stirring within us always beholds this emancipatory truth in its entirety, for that would be the consummation towards which, as yet, we only tend. But all the sweet sympathies and tender compassions and noble sacrifices and acts of brotherly helpfulness, that beautify and lift up our common life, all the voices that are staunchly heralding the coming of a better day in politics and industry and the whole life of society, all the heroic efforts to usher in that day;—these betray the truth that we are near the time of a larger and truer vision of our relations with one another and with the universe.

5. But there is a yet deeper and more vital sense in which we may understand that love is of the very essence of God. It is the will to

serve without reward; it is the perception of the infinite worthiness of every being it could serve; it sees that serving one is serving the whole, of which itself is a part; but it is more than a perception, or an act following an intuition. It is a movement of nature itself. Life tends to concentrate, to return toward the Center whence it was projected, that it might by seeming separation, and the path of individual consciousness, voluntarily pass into universal consciousness. And that all the affections and attractions by which husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend, are irresistibly drawn together are the instinctive motions of this one nature that has produced affinities only that they may unite. All the sweet acts of love, gradually becoming purer, freeing themselves from the decay and dross of selfishness, rising to the knowledge and height of their own nature—these are the more or less intelligent and voluntary efforts to "do by knowledge what the stones do by structure." Love is the longing for home; it is the effort to reach home. It is the homing instinct that clasps to its breast all its own, and later knows as its own all the manifestations of this one great, wedded parental, brotherly, filial

life. Love is the constructive, welding, fusing power that works throughout nature. Love, the very life of God, is, in the world, the process of reunion in that Life which is in all and *is* all.

VI

THE WILL TO LOVE

Love, being the current of life, rushing with a great, silent, irresistible force toward its center, the Primal Energy that flows through all the forms of its own creation, gathering up and transmuting all the particular energies of each individual, through which it has striven to express itself—must, in the time of sufficient ripeness of the understanding, make itself known and obeyed as the highest law. Willing obedience thereto is the blessed destiny of every one of its children. But ages and accumulations of experience beyond human computation, form the process by which Nature guides the infant soul, freeing itself from the weights, vestiges and decays of selfishness and error, and coming to hold in its crystal purity, the one great purpose of life, to live only in the universal interest that holds the welfare of each as dear as that of every other. Every now and then, in this

long process of the unfolding of the true life and power of the soul, a gleam breaks on the inner sight, revealing the apparently distant height toward which we tend, and also the possibility that the strong, quick spirit may overleap in one supreme effort all the weary distance, may discount all the toilsome up-hill and down, extract the significance of it all, and pass swiftly to a point of knowledge and power that overlooks the care and sorrow and striving that otherwise were his lot. A sense of wings becomes his and for a brief moment he breathes the upper air. Alas! that the faith is so poor, the will so weak that he sinks back again and creeps, and thinks he must creep, and almost enjoys the creeping. The celestial radiance so fades, he almost doubts whether he ever caught the supernal ray. He goes on trying to mix the transcendent perfume of love, whose very nature is pure benevolence, with the fumes of his own desires, an experiment which is doomed from the beginning to unmitigated failure.

O, man! hearken to the voice of Wisdom that speaketh to thee a new and living message. The great words with which it smites thine ear bear the intelligence of the truth that thy faith is not

small, thy will not weak; that the fairy gleam which broke upon the night of thine ignorance and wilfulness was a ray from the sun of an eternal day. It is not necessary, it is not meet, that thou shouldst grovel and strive and distress thy soul with all these cares and efforts to get and to hold that which is not lasting or real, and that will not satisfy, even when thou dost possess it for a brief season. All that thy poor young hands reach out for will perish in their grasp and the desire shall pass beyond them, yet unfulfilled. Thou didst see truly in the mount of vision. The place of power is where thou hast divested thyself of all thy personal desires, thy private interests, washed them away, once and forever, in the purifying, life-giving tide of the great purpose *to give;* to give without thought or wish for reward; to give as the sun and air and rain, as the mountains and flowers give; as all strong and beautiful things of nature give;—to give as the great God we have conceived of, gives;—freely, largely, unquestioningly, impartially, untiringly; to pour out the life in the great joy of giving. Thy salvation, the salvation of the universe lies in this, that thou shalt give *all.* Arise in thy might! thou canst do it, for it is

what thou art. Thou hast found the "pearl of great price," thy life, thy destiny, thy God, thyself, in *the Will to Love.*

But after the sacred joy of the great solemnity in which this once-for-all consecration is made, there must be, day by day, and hour by hour,—truly moment by moment,—in the attitude of the mind, if not in the conscious action,—the continual, strenuous putting-forth of the will to love, in all the relations, actions, transactions and functions of the interior and exterior life.

We must train the mind to love—to think of no object or person or event or relationship, with any consideration of any possible gain that is to come to self by means of it. To keep the thoughts free from any taint of disdain of any lowliest or meanest or most repulsive object or action; to consider that the quality that causes the physical or moral shiver on our part, is but a temporarily concentrated and abnormal expression of energy which may be turned into the divinest channels. To pronounce even in the silent court of our own most secret thoughts, no judgment, no condemnation of any sin of any soul, that is not also a recognition of that soul's divine nature and possibilities, and an aspiration

and determination for that soul, that he shall leave the sin that is not his and attain to the holiness that is his own. Above all, we must train the mind's eye to look at the eternal beauty of the Invisible with such firm resolve that its outlines shall daily grow clear and true, and no material landscape shall be more defined for us than the pure realm of Principle.

We must train the heart to love. Having disengaged our minds from the confusion caused by the false premise, that affection is love, we shall no longer be troubled by the query whether it be possible for us to love all men as we love those whom, according to the flesh or the choice of congeniality, we call our own. We shall be able to gather, as never before, all the dear sweetness and tender loveliness of the natural affectional relations, when we regard these precious souls as in no sense our own, except as they and we are expressions of the great Life that brought us into this nearness to one another, that thus we might learn more quickly and thoroughly the details of the supreme lesson. Then first do I love my child when I see him as Life's child and become to him a channel of Life's purifying, upbearing force. And

understanding that love is not the pleasure of possession, even of the noblest heart on earth, or of the sweetest affections of that heart; that love is not the delight of being held close in a tender embrace, or held high in the appreciation and estimation of the friend whose opinion seems to us of the greatest value; but that it is that divine sympathy by which we may pass over into the life of every child of God, recognize that one as another self, whose needs and welfare are as important as our own, or those of the one for whom we feel the greatest responsibility;—we may become true lovers, heart-lovers of the race, a divine enthusiasm glowing and burning within us, making of the life a great, hospitable hearth, at which shall be warmed and lighted many naked and shivering souls, who shall go forth cheered and clad in the knowledge of their own divine heritage, the holy fire having become kindled in their bosoms, also.

We must train all the faculties to love. The voice and the hand must become love's own instruments. He who would beat all "swords into ploughshares," must remember that the tongue may be the sharpest of two-edged swords. Why should the tongue or pen be considered the most

effective when used as weapons of warfare? Say, rather, that they are instruments to be used for the edification of all that is high and noble, and that will by reason of its own existence make obsolete all that is lower or poorer. The true artist criticises only "by creation." The work of the lover is purely constructive.

When we plant vineyards that our brothers may be fed, when we build cities that they may be the habitations of brothers, when all the expenditures of capital and labor are sacraments of love, when our lines of commerce bear only messages and gifts of lovers, then shall we realize the permeating glory of the Will to love, which is not only the blessed privilege, but the whole duty of man.

Let us strengthen our faith, reassure our hearts, and reinforce our faltering resolutions, with the knowledge that by nature are we constituted lovers, that the possibilities of the human will are limitless because it is an expression of that Omnipotent Will by which the worlds were called into being and the universal order is preserved; that when we will to love, we set the individual will in line with the highest law, we strike a melody that loses itself in the symphony

of life. Thus the soul passes into her native realm, which is "wider than space, older than time, high as hope. . . . Pusilanimity and fear she refuses with a beautiful scorn; they are not for her who putteth on her coronation robes and goes out through universal love to universal power."

VII

THE MOST HIGH GOD

There is a beatitude that encloses our highest aspiration. It is an ineffable light that banishes all our conceptions of darkness. It is the shining of a soft brilliance that comes from no central body, but is pervading and intrinsic. In its complete purity the individual soul is bathed, until he passes into, and becomes one with, its crystal clearness. Beyond this perfect transparency there is naught to be seen, for it contains, and is, full satisfaction for the eye that is open to behold it. It is the Perfect Intelligence that holds all objects of Knowledge as the children of its own creation. It is the Pure Joy that precedes, encloses, and is the goal of all the alternations of pleasure and pain. It is the end or completion of Love, in that it is the realiza-

tion of that identity of nature that discovers no more parts to be united. It is the Omnipotence that creates forms and raises and refines them into unobstructed power. It is somewhat more than the stilling of all personal desires, for it sees desire as existing only when this perfection is not realized. Not that desire is in itself any unholy thing; it is but the token of an incomplete state of consciousness, the beholding of some manifestation or intimation of the Universal Good as a separate good, and distinct from the would-be possessor; conjoined with the instinctive movement of nature that unites itself with all good that it can perceive. It becomes harmful only when it emphasizes that separateness and would, for the attainment of this one pitiful portion, exclude all else; and when it becomes regardless of the equal right of all divine souls; when the false conception *"mine"* takes on an excluding significance which in nowise belongs to it. But, in the light of this nearness of Pure Truth, it is known that there is nothing to desire, that not only is there the complement of every faculty and capacity, that each has been met and wedded by each, but that, in a higher reality, there was no parting.

It is possible for the individual soul to reach up, to unclose its eyes unto the soft smiting of this celestial radiance, to pass into and enclose itself within, to know itself one with, this all-encompassing Perfection.

That at times this transcendent experience has come into many lives, we know, from the testimony of souls every here and there, who, in connection with many different formulations of religious conception, have, through sacrifice, meditation, and loving service, passed into widely-acknowledged sainthood. And added to these are the words of many humble followers of the pure gleam, who have, in obscure lives of sweet patience and faithfulness, stumbled, as it were, upon the spring which has opened an otherwise unseen door into this realm of unmixed, celestial beauty.

That it is our destiny to refuse to remain content with these glimpses, and to become absorbed, translated into this Fullness of Life—in no sense losing ourselves, but finding all that is high and true and permanent in self—this we know with a solemn certitude that is past the power of argument to confirm or refute.

On our way thither there are various stages

in the knowledge of God through which all of us, perhaps, have passed or must pass.

There is first the time when we conceive of Him as outside of ourselves. This state of development has its own degrees and progressions. From doubts as to whether this extraneous Power is not sometimes antagonistic to, and subversive of, our interests, we come by the paths of many observations, experiences and intuitions, to revere, to trust, to love, to claim kinship with, to regard as "Father," this more or less clearly perceived Authority. The point at which we can, with all sweet and glad and unquestioning trust, look into this Father's loving face, with hearts full of responsive, filial love, is high and true; and I would bid any young soul to tarry there until he has built into himself all that is of value and beauty in this conception. The essence of the trust thus generated lays hold on the real, and *may* be carried over without a break into the sublime atmosphere of the higher knowledge, "I and my Father are one." But not always can this be done. Sometimes there must be a soul-trying hour when all that seemed so true and real fades, crumbles, slips from our grasp, and our hands and lives seem empty and sunless for a while.

The lower stages of a higher development often seem depressed below the greatest heights attained by the estate of nature or thought that is really more primary; for example, the lowest animal organizations appear much farther from completion and beauty than many expressions of vegetable life that well-nigh approach perfection in their own way. But the power of will that is revealed in even the very slightly organized creatures of the lowest classes of the animal realm, admonish us that here is another and higher type of life. Thus as we pass from the conception of a God without ourselves to the understanding that all the power that exists is resident within us,—and yet do not perceive this power as infinite and eternal Intelligence,—it often appears a fall into materialistic darkness. In the place of a personal God we have only impersonal laws and force, and a certain high element is lost out of our universe of conception, which leaves us the dreary feeling that we are poor, bereft "orphans of nothing." Yet the very fact of our being thus flung upon ourselves, is a condition from which there is likely to grow a larger conception of truth. "When we have broken our god of tradition, and

ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with His presence." But that glow may not be kindled until there has been many a sturdy, conscience-strong act of self-dependence, of loyalty to the right for right's own sake, that recks not of a past nor a future and recognizes no height of being except goodness. Let us render a true and tender respect to any soul we may chance to meet who is passing through this stage of development,—who sees naught which he feels he can justly call God, and yet worships God by the integrity and cleanliness of his life. His lesson at this stage is a far harder one than that of him who has a God, whether it be a God on authority, or a God of his own finding.

But this is no permanent tarrying place. When the power of vision grows strong enough, we see a larger and better truth. We see the God of all intelligence, wisdom and purpose, finding his being in and through all manifested life; God in the sod, in the plant, in the animal, in the man, groaning, sorrowing, toiling, groping his way back unto his own. We dare to say, "God is in me; all of my tears are God's tears; all of my pains are God's pains; all of my expe-

riences of every sort are God's experiences; all of my aspirations are the upreachings of the Holy Spirit within, toward the Eternal Bliss that is His own high estate." And little by little we come into the exercise of the confidence and patience and hope and love that we feel are the virtues growing in the soil of the divine nature within us. We will listen to the divine voice, we will trust the divine wisdom that is within, we will let the divine compassion flow through us; we will be channels for the vigorous outpush of the divine energy, and even the physical being shall, if possible, form no obstruction to the full expression of the Divine Will. The God within, the God we are, shall, by our consecration and effort, grow, as speedily as may be, toward His own heights of glory and power. We have taken a great step onward when we thus identify ourselves with the God that is our own true life, the God that is in the world and is the world, and that moves with ceaseless and certain step onward and upward toward the supreme and perfect bliss in which the "One without a second" is alone known. There are untold depths and reaches of wealth and beauty, of experience and potentiality, within the zones girded by these

great thoughts, and we must tarry here for long, or return again and again, to garner up and incorporate into the character, all of these namelessly vast riches. Something of this growing, giving, toiling God, we must ever know and be, until all of manifested life shall have found its full redemption; for no soul can attain perfection until all souls are with him, for he is but a portion of the great, common life.

But there comes a time when a soul knows that he may, at least at intervals, pass to a greater height than even this fine, pure earnestness and exalted purposefulness; that he may pass beyond the confines of even this consciousness of his own divine nature and destiny, up through all the potentialities of life in every form, into that Infinite that transcends them all. His highest consciousness is no longer that of being a part of an evolving, divine world, a travailing, divine humanity, but of being one with the Eternal, "the same yesterday, today and forever." The finite, "which toils and suffers," passes almost into the shadow of forgetfulness and there remains only the Infinite "stretched in smiling repose," there shines only the perfection of unobstructed, nightless day. His "eyes

are holden" that he may not become sightless with the great glory. If he reasons about it, he will say that he knows that, compared to the endless powers that he is conscious are opening in and from him, on every side, he now is able to catch but the most infinitesimal glimpse. But he knows that it has been given him to behold The Most High God.

Henceforth all the objects and experiences of life, shrunken and shrivelled into unseemly insignificance, must, if they are to exist at all, be lifted up and receive the revivifying touch of a new meaning and dignity which this light alone can give them. From that height the soul looks down on the world-process with the interest of complete certitude. He sees the end so clearly that all steps toward it, however feeble or halting or slow they may appear, are beheld through the medium of a joyous and moveless confidence. He sees his own personality as but a small portion of the whole, of no more importance than any other, and he looks at it with precisely the same interest he feels in all others. It is being moulded and guided by the great beneficence and wisdom that pervade it and all else; it is animated by so much of the Universal Spirit as

it gives place to; and the freed soul, no longer that personality, but only a dweller in, or *with* it, for purposes of utility, is glad of every experience of every sort, that shapes it into a truer channel for the onflowing of the divine life. He is content with life's work. He is one with the Worker. He is enwrapped and filled with an unending serenity. Yet his ministry has no chill of indifference. It is the touch of infinite tenderness, of deific efficiency. He is one with his fellows as he could not be until he rose above them and himself, and knew himself and them as one with their Source and Purpose.

To voluntarily rise to this height is the privilege and duty of every soul. To have entered into the wonder of this Ineffable Beauty but once, is to have seen the way of life. To abide in it is to have passed from death unto life.

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